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URGES USE OF MEDICINAL PETROLEUM

A. Neyman, Chief Engineer
Naphthalene Factory
Baku

Not far from Kirovabad, Azerbaydzhan SSR, is the world's only natural source of medicinal petroleum, also known as naphthalene. The industrial town of Naftalan has been built around the oil field. In 1938, an experimental naphthalene factory was erected here by governmental decree. At the same time, a scientific research laboratory was built at Baku and a laboratory of aqueous emulsions and naphthalene was organized in Moscow.

The efforts of the scientific institutions bore fruit, and naphthalene ointment was widely adopted in medical practice for treating diseases of joints, pains in the muscles and the spinal column, and minor afflictions of the peripheral nervous system. It has also been used successfully to treat minor trauma of the skin and muscles, urological and female diseases, and furuncles.

The factory, which ceased production during World War II, is once again in full-scale operation. However, it is surprising to note that medicinal naphthalene preparations are being utilized only in Azerbaydzhan SSR. In 1948, some 200 tons of naphthalene preparations were manufactured; however, there is still a considerable stockpile available. Unless wider use is made of such items as naphthalene ointment, the factory will have to curtail production.

There seems to be no valid reason for the lack of popularity of naphthalene ointments. Actually, research has increased the potential uses, and its popularity should be increasing. Part of the difficulty can be attributed to the education given to present-day medical students. The great majority of them know nothing of the medicinal properties of naphthalene. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Health USSR to disseminate knowledge concerning the therapeutic value of naphthalene ointments and to see that some items be included in the complete inventory of every apothecary.

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